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Agenda Item 7(b)

Sessional Committee II

Improving the participation of developing countries' experts in UNCTAD meetings, including the question of financing their participation

Draft agreed conclusions

1. The Sessional Committee had an exchange of views on the question of improving the participation of developing countries' experts in UNCTAD meetings, including the question of financing their participation. The discussion included the issues contained in document TD/B/43/CRP.3. There was general agreement that the expert meetings called for by "A Partnership for Growth and Development" needed the active participation of experts from every interested region in order to benefit from a higher level of technical expertise. It was recognized that the costs involved might cause problems to developing countries, in particular to the least developed among them, and that measures needed to be taken to facilitate the participation of developing country experts, including by providing a predictable and stable funding basis.

2. The options provided in document TD/B/43/CRP.3 were reviewed in the course of the discussion. Delegations agreed that many questions still needed to be clarified, including the issues of long-term funding and the possible use of the regular budget for this purpose. It was agreed, however, to take a number of measures immediately, on a provisional basis, in order to give effect to the decisions taken at Midrand. It was also felt necessary to gain some experience with the operation of the new intergovernmental machinery before taking any long-term decisions on this matter.

3. As a concrete measure on a trial basis, the Sessional Committee agreed to recommend to the Trade and Development Board that:

(i) It request the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to establish, subsequent to consultations with member States, a trust fund the purpose of which is to enhance the participation of developing country experts in UNCTAD meetings. The meetings referred to are those described in paragraph 114 of "A Partnership for Growth and Development" which also states specifically that: "Experts should be nominated by Governments, should have proven experience and would serve expert meetings in their personal capacities". The Secretary-General should base his decisions regarding the enhancement of the participation of developing country experts on the principle of equitable geographical representation and beneficiary needs;

(ii) It request the Secretary-General to start the fund-raising process and the activities of the trust fund as soon as possible;

(iii) It request the Secretary-General to explore avenues to increase developing country expert participation in addition to the financing of travel and per diem costs. In particular, recourse to modern methods of communication should be borne in mind;

(iv) It request the Secretary-General to consider also the possibility of enhancing further the participation of developing country experts through the judicious use of his prerogative to invite experts contributing to the work of the secretariat and enable them to participate also in expert meetings;

(v) It request the Secretary-General to present to the Board as soon as possible a report on the decision taken at Midrand that: "With a view to strengthening UNCTAD's capabilities, including inter alia technical cooperation, ways and means should be explored within the existing financial rules and regulations of the United Nations to reallocate a part of the savings resulting from improved overall cost-effectiveness";

(vi) It assess, at its next regular session, after adequate preparations, the effectiveness of these measures and their impact on improving developing country expert participation based on a report prepared by the Secretary-General in this regard;

(vii) It decide, at its next regular session, in the light of the above assessment and the financial situation of the fund, whether or not to pursue elements of the first option outlined in TD/B/43/CRP.3.